



# “If I am Assassinated..,”

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

*With an Introduction by*  
Pran Chopra



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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF PAKISTAN

*Criminal Appellate Jurisdiction*  
*Criminal Appeal No. II of 1978*

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto  
Son of Sir Shab Nawaz Bhutto  
District Jail  
Rawalpindi ..... Appellant  
Versus  
The State ..... Respondent

The undersigned Appellant respectfully submits:-

1. that during the pendency of the present Appeal and while it was being heard before this Honourable Court, the Government of Pakistan has come out with two White Papers, one on the alleged rigging of elections in March 1977, and the other on the alleged misuse of the news media during the tenure of my Government. Obviously the time for publicising the false, fabricated and malicious allegations contained in these two White Papers has been deliberately chosen and is a calculated attempt to prejudice mankind against me and to prejudice the hearing of my case. The second White Paper on the media, which was issued on 28 August 1978, was in fact printed on 25 March 1978, as would appear from the printing date on the front page and the cover, on which another date was superimposed.

2. that I am confined in a death cell and have no access to the material needed for effectively refuting the false and scandalous allegations in these "White Papers." But nevertheless, with all my limitations, I have attempted a reply to the same in the following paragraphs to keep the record straight, and for such action as this Hon'ble Court deems fit in the interest of Justice.



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# Introduction

## “More Than My Life Is At Stake”

### *The Omens*

Rao Abdur Rashid, a former Director of the Intelligence Bureau of Pakistan, has reported to the Supreme Court of Pakistan that Brigadier Abdul Naeem, a trusted member of the military group which rules Pakistan, had the following conversation with him one day about Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, President and Prime Minister of Pakistan until he was deposed in a military coup, put into jail and sentenced to death:

Brigadier Abdul Naeem: “Do you think that the army can afford to see Mr Bhutto back in power?”

Rao Abdur Rashid, a trusted Special Secretary to Bhutto, keeps a discreet silence.

Brigadier Naeem answers his own question and says: “Obviously it can’t.”

Before departing, Brigadier Naeem advises Rao Abdur Rashid: “Please cooperate with the army.”

This conversation sums up the dire threat that hangs on the head of Mr Bhutto “in this narrow, dark, stinking death cell, where I am confined 22 or 23 hours every day.” This is how Bhutto describes what has been his residence for almost a year in the District Jail, Rawalpindi.

Bhutto has appealed to the Supreme Court against the death sentence passed on him by the Lahore High Court on an allegedly political murder under his instructions when he was in power. The Supreme Court has concluded the hearings and reserved judgement.

But the military government of Pakistan has kept up a barrage of propaganda against him to influence the Supreme Court, Bhutto alleges, while it considers his appeal. White Papers are being issued at regular intervals denouncing him and his record as President and Prime Minister.

Many doubts have been expressed, among others by a former US Attorney-General, Mr Ramsay Clark, about the quality of the Lahore trial. More about that in this Introduction later. But here it is more urgent to ask: Is public opinion being prepared for Bhutto's execution if the Supreme Court confirms the death sentence? The answer is anyone's guess, but from the point of view of the condemned prisoner there are five ominous indications.

The first comes from Iran and is confirmed by Brigadier Naeem. If an Ayatollah Khomeini, exiled from his country for 15 years, sitting in a suburb of Paris a few thousand miles away from his country, using only the beams of his charisma to rekindle passion among his followers, can bring about the downfall of such a powerful and entrenched monarch as the Shah of Iran, what could not Bhutto do to the military regime of President Zia if he got the chance?

This interpretation gains weight from the fact that according to the Teheran newspaper, *Kaihan*, President Zia had at one time agreed to let Bhutto go into exile if two heads of State guaranteed that he would not re-enter polities for 10 years. But he went back on the idea after seeing what happened in Iran.

Bhutto has more charisma than any politician in Pakistan since Jinnah. This is what has given him his meteoric career. Only 20 years ago he was a little known playboy of Larkana. Scion of a famous family though he was, and vivacious of personality, brilliant of mind, he appeared to be destined only to be the star of a limited and feudal firmament. Then the eye of President Mirza fell on him, or to be more precise on his family connections, and at the age of 30 he became a minister. His intellectual flair, his Oxford degree in law and his years at the University of California earned him the coveted post of Foreign Minister, where he was later to initiate a policy of close relations with China.

But 10 years later, the magnet of his personality made contact with a restless student power which was then looking for a leader, and Bhutto broke out of the confines of family connections and presidential patronage. First he mobilized the country's youth to overthrow President Ayub, no less, and then steadily built up his

mass appeal and made it the strongest power in Pakistan with the possible exception of the army's guns.

His brief imprisonment in 1968 for criticizing President Ayub only added to his political glamour. In the elections of 1970 and 1977, he proved that no one in West Pakistan could come anywhere near the voting power of his now famous charisma. In Pakistan's second adult franchise elections two years ago, he proved again that he was the country's undisputed mass leader. Just as President Ayub made Bhutto's charisma shine by arresting him in 1968, so did General Zia by arresting him twice in 1977 and thus setting in motion a whole chain of events which has brought Pakistan to its present acute crisis and Bhutto to the footsteps of the gallows.

There are two versions about General Zia's reasons for the first arrest, but only one version for the second. After the elections in March 1977 there were bloody protests by the main opposition party, the Pakistan National Alliance, which had lost heavily to Bhutto's ruling Pakistan People's Party, too heavily for the margin of victory to be convincing though PPP's victory by a narrower margin was not in doubt.

Saudi Arabia, through its ambassador in Pakistan, began high pressure mediation between the two sides, and was reported to be making good progress. But on July 4th, one of the PNA negotiators said there was no progress, and the same night the army struck, leading to Bhutto's first arrest. Obviously, plans for the coup must have been ready long before they were carried out. Why was it planned then?

One version is that the scale of the rioting from April to June had convinced the Chief of the Army Staff that the army must step in to save the country. His plans were ready. The reported failure of the negotiations only triggered them off. The second version is Bhutto's, according to which "a foreign power" was bent upon overthrowing him, and when it failed to get the PNA to defeat him in the elections, it struck through the army.

Shortly after taking over the country, General Zia announced he would hold elections in October because "Operation Fairplay," the code name by which the coup was carried out, was only meant to be a holding operation, he said, an exercise to help conduct fair elections. For this reason he released Bhutto. But in view of what followed his explanation does not hold water.

Much more likely is it that General Zia had allowed himself to believe that in the preceding year or so Bhutto had made himself so unpopular that he could have won the elections in March only

by rigging them, and with the army now ensuring fair play PPP would be defeated and Pakistan rescued from Bhutto's misrule. But General Zia was shocked to see that in spite of the misrule, the instant magic of Bhutto's appeal was still intact. Crowds flocked to Bhutto as they had never done before. Mass appeal was pitted against military power, and military power responded in the only way it could. Charisma and all, Bhutto was put back into jail and elections postponed to a safer day.

On the other hand General Zia is probably the most uncharismatic head of state and head of government Pakistan has ever had, and what he lacks in charisma he does not make up, as some of his predecessors did, either by the record of his administration or by the backing of any political organization which has roots among the people. The army backs him still, but that does not draw popular affection towards him because the army has not recovered its image since 1971. Bhutto has.

Therefore if he broke loose from prison one day, Bhutto would be ten times more potent against President Zia than the Ayatollah has been against the Shah, who at least had glamour if not charisma, at least had a vision to his credit if not wisdom, and a record of some performance in pursuit of the vision.

Bhutto alive would be a very dangerous man—possibly free one day and probably in power the next day. If he came back to power the first thing he would want to do is to settle scores with his present tormentors, and General Zia will want to deny him that opportunity by any means he can. If General Zia is convinced, and he has every reason to be, that either it is his neck or Bhutto's, he will try to save his neck by breaking the other's when he can. Later it may be too late, because in the eyes of Bhutto, President Zia has already committed "high treason" punishable with death.

This is how the 1973 constitution promulgated by Bhutto describes the offence of any forcible attempt to upset that constitution, and General Zia has certainly upset it by force. He has suspended the constitution and has tried to amend it by means which are not provided in the constitution. This was an attempt which the former President of Pakistan Chaudhary Fazl Elahi found so repugnant that he resigned.

The second omen comes from the nature of politics in Pakistan since the removal of Bhutto. Military governments, and authoritarian governments generally, are by nature insensitive to public opinion; hence their tendency to ignore public reaction and to press ahead, regardless, with decisions which satisfy their technocratic

criteria however well or ill-motivated they may be. The government of General Zia is no exception to this in spite of the politicians it has co-opted as very junior civilian partners.

In fact General Zia's government is in danger of being especially isolated from public opinion, or from mass opinion to be more exact, because of certain blunders committed by Bhutto himself. During the closing years of his power, Bhutto alienated the top elite in almost all walks of life in Pakistan—the army, the administration, the learned professions and business—by his arrogance and the sheer injustice of some of his actions, especially against a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. These are the very kinds of people the army leaders will turn to, if at all they wish to put their biases against Bhutto to the test of a wider consultation. Bias will speak to resentment and will be instantly confirmed in its own wisdom.

Many people must be after Bhutto's blood in the circles in which the decision makers of the military regime move; the circles in which Bhutto is adored are normally out of their hearing. This is precisely how General Zia had formed the misjudgement by which he ordered elections in 1977, and he might now be in danger of repeating the mistake. But while Bhutto might pay the price of his past actions now, the country might pay the price of mass anger soon afterwards.

The third omen is that President Zia is already doing what he can do at this stage to ensure that it will not be his neck, and that Bhutto will not simply languish somewhere in some Elba from where he can stage a Napoleonic comeback but will hang till he dies.

Some neighbouring Islamic powers have a friendly interest in the future peace of Pakistan and a friendly interest in President Zia because he is posing the ideology of Islamic orthodoxy against the heretical ideology of socialism preached (though not practised) by Bhutto. They have therefore advised President Zia not to execute the former President and thus set Pakistan ablaze and imperil his own future. They are reported to have offered to keep Bhutto indefinitely in prison in their own countries, out of harm's way.

President Zia has rejected the offers. He suspects, in the first place, that the country which held Bhutto would also hold a gun at President Zia's head, it could pull the trigger by releasing Bhutto. In the second place he feels he cannot trust the safety of prisons in countries in which thrones are not safe. There is no hard confir-

mation of these reports, but enough has flowed along the diplomatic grapevine to suggest that they are well founded.

The fourth serious omen against Bhutto is that to the extent that President Zia is showing concern for public opinion at all, he is showing it by gagging Bhutto's defence as much as he can against the propaganda barrage which is being conducted against him. The White Papers which are being issued by the government one after another are being given the widest possible publicity—and as much abroad as at home, because in this matter President Zia is as much worried about reactions in other countries as in his own—while not only is Bhutto denied the chance to reply to them (in fact he is being held *incommunicado*), his supporters are also being arrested in large numbers and denied the opportunity of public contact.

The worst example of this one way flow is the first and the fattest of the White Papers and it is also the principal justification for this *Introduction* you are now reading and the book you are about to read.

As soon as Bhutto went to the Supreme Court in appeal against his death sentence, the Pakistan government published, and widely and intensively publicized, a voluminous White Paper of over a thousand pages, piling up what the government claimed was authentic evidence against him on some of the very charges which figured in his appeal.

Bhutto contends with some justification and much logic—contends in a statement he filed in the Supreme Court in the course of his appeal—that the White Paper was issued, and issued in this manner, expressly with the purpose of prejudicing his trial. Bhutto also contends, again with some evidence, that in this White Paper Yahya Bakhtiar has been made a special target, with a view to destroying his credibility in the eyes of the judges. Bakhtiar, an Attorney-General when Bhutto was in power, was his senior Defence Counsel in the Supreme Court hearings. A dent in the credibility of Bakhtiar would be worth a ton of evidence to the prosecution.

Since the appeal hearings were still going on when the first White Paper was issued and Bhutto was still in court, he took the opportunity of the hearings to rebut the White Paper at length in a 300-page statement, and the statement became one of the principal documents of his appeal. But the government blacked it out. It was not allowed to be reported in the press, a few newspapers which tried to report it came under pre-censorship and the government

sealed a press in which Yahya Bakhtiar tried to print some copies.

But a copy of this statement, "written with the paper resting on my knees" says Bhutto, was smuggled out of the death cell. It is published here without any changes except some regrouping of the original sections into convenient chapter sizes and a few deletions to eliminate some obvious repetitions.

Four more White Papers were issued after the appeal hearings ended, and while the judges were exposed to all five of them as they ruminated on the appeal, Bhutto had an opportunity to offer his counter-arguments only on one of them, while at the bar of public opinion he has not been allowed to rebut any one of the five. As the people of Pakistan decide how they should react to whatever happens to their former President and Prime Minister—and the only elected one they have ever had—they will know less about his side of the case than a reader of this book. Even the world press has seen only a few brief excerpts from his statement out of the mass of very revealing material that it contains.

The fifth and final omen is being enacted in Pakistan as these lines are written. The Supreme Court of Pakistan was expected, on good authority, to announce its verdict by the end of January. The expectation also was that if the Supreme Court confirmed the death sentence, it would be quickly carried out, with only essential minimum time allowed for Bhutto to appeal for clemency if he wanted to do so (his daughter has denied that he will). Quick execution of the sentence is not merely true to military style, it is also called for by the exigencies of the situation and reinforced by the severity of Islamic justice which Pakistan has been cultivating under President Zia.

As the deadline approached BBC reported "an uneasy calm" in Pakistan broken only by reports of further arrests of PPP leaders, actions against more of them in Martial Law courts, some explosions in various towns, troop dispositions and reports of resignations from the government by members who had once served under Bhutto. But the judgement has not been announced at the time of this writing, although the Supreme Court had earlier said the verdict would be out by the end of January. Why? The current line of speculation is that President Zia, aware of the turmoil which would ensue from the execution, has decided to wait till after an Islamic Ministers' conference, due to be held in Pakistan in the middle of February, is out of the way.

But if this is the reason for persuading the Supreme Court to postpone the verdict, the postponement can only be for a brief

period. Apart from other urgencies which are pressing upon Bhutto, there is the urgency of President Zia's own immediate future. He is due to retire from the army at the end of February, and he can shape his own future only in the light of how he shapes Bhutto's. He may not wish to leave the decision to others nor may others wish to let him pass the buck to them.

Confirming this speculation is Bhutto's own premonition, which he expressed in his statement which the government blacked out. Referring to the government's publicity campaign against him he says, "The object is to vitiate the climate of opinion against me, so that every one from the humblest clerk to the mightiest court may be driven to one conclusion. . . . The onslaught has been gradually escalating from 5 July 1977 to 28 August 1978, but still the peak of the publicity will be reached when the judgement on my appeal is at hand." At the time Bhutto wrote these words only two White Papers had been issued, the second on 28 August. Since then four more have been issued in quick succession. The fourth has been announced as the last (at least for the present). The peak has been reached. The judgement may not be far away.

### *How Bhutto Fell*

Much of the earlier part of Bhutto's statement is a reply to the specific charge against him that he rigged the general elections held in March 1977, and for the purpose drew up, at his home town of Larkana, in Sind, an elaborate plot which the prosecution describes as the "Larkana Plan."

Many details of this allegation, and Bhutto's counter-allegation against the army that it interfered in the elections and at times actively worked for the main opposition party, PNA, would make more sense to a reader in Pakistan than one outside; they require for their understanding an intimate knowledge of the intricacies of the domestic politics of Pakistan.

But even when seen from a distance they are an eloquent warning to all who care to heed it of what happens to the political, the democratic and the electoral process when too much power comes to vest in too few hands in the government, and when the army forgets that managing the politics of the country is not its business.

But the main value of the document lies above and beyond these particular charges and counter-charges, and this value will live whether Bhutto lives or not and whether he rigged the elections or not. This value lies in the outpourings of a brilliant mind from his

chamber of death, the most brilliant in Pakistan after Jinnah, and among the most brilliant anywhere in southern Asia.

As happens with such outpourings, Bhutto's statement rambles and rants and repeats itself. It overstates the case in some places, over-simplifies it in others, and Bhutto's judgement is often blurred by his Messiah-complex, his verbose conviction that he and he alone is the man born to deliver Pakistan, to free the masses from their tyrants. But what emerges in the end is an outstanding political document, probably the most perceptive and most informative diagnosis of Pakistan. It is a document of great intensity and significance, as revealing of the man as of his times.

Whether it is good for Bhutto or not for the effectiveness of his defence on the specific charges against him, it is good for students of the history of Pakistan, and even better for students of the political process in developing countries, that this former President and Prime Minister of Pakistan is not addressing the court in this statement. He is speaking to history from the platform of his own brilliant mind and his unique experience of one of the most interesting countries of the developing world.

the result of a deal between the army and PNA, and between both of them and a "foreign power" (or powers). The deal at the "foreign" level was that the PNA would receive Rs 30 crores for winning the elections, and if it failed the army would be supported in a bid for a coup. In return the new rulers of Pakistan would drop the nuclear reprocessing plant which Bhutto had negotiated with France.

The deal at the local level was that the army would support the PNA's election campaign (and did support it in various ways according to Bhutto). If the election bid failed the army would take over, and later invite PNA to join the government (but only as a very junior partner) to add a civilian flavour to the military government.

Bhutto's evidence to prove that a deal was made is sketchy and circumstantial and might not stand in court. But he is convincing in explaining that it is not fair to expect him to produce documentary evidence from his prolonged seclusion, first in prison and then in a death cell, and that Pakistan's national interests prevent him from disclosing all that he could even in his present circumstances, especially the name of the foreign power concerned.

However it is less relevant to ask whether he is accurate than to ask whether he is sincere in denouncing the role of foreign influence and military power in the politics of Pakistan. His record is a mixed one in this respect. In his early days in the government Bhutto rendered fulsome homage to the best known of the military rulers of Pakistan, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, and in one statement in 1961 described Ayub as "more than a Lincoln... more than a Lenin... our Attaturk... a Salahuddin." There is reason to believe that four years later; in urging President Ayub to wage the 1965 war against India, he was content to leave the defence of East Pakistan to China; acceptance of hegemony cannot go much further.

Five years later, he was still willing to let this two-sided coin of hegemony and coup-gemony jingle in his pocket. It was with the help of army generals and with the evidence of foreign backing (which he himself vaunted) that he became President and Chief Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan on 20th December 1971.

In his first broadcast after he assumed office, he rightly boasted "... I have been elected by the people," because he had won the 1970 elections in the western wing, and when he said "I have not been captiously thrust upon the people" he rightly implied that his two predecessors, Presidents Ayub and Yahya Khan, had been so thrust. But it was not this election that made him President in

1971, but that he was favoured by the USA and by two top military men, Lt-Gen. Gul Hassan, Chief of the Army General Staff (whom he promoted C-in-C as fast as he could) and Air Marshal Rahim Khan, the Air Chief.

Before Bhutto left the UN debate on Bangladesh to rush back home, he knew of reports that air force planes had "buzzed" the palace of President Yahya Khan to make him step down, and before he arrived in Rawalpindi the generals knew that he had arrived via clearance meetings in Washington with President Nixon and the Secretary of State William Rogers. This is what accounts for the speed and smoothness with which he seized power: he drove into the Presidential palace on the forenoon of 20 December for a showdown meeting with Yahya Khan, and a couple of hours later drove out with the presidential flag flying on his car.

But Bhutto deserves more credit than any other Pakistani politician, with the exception only of the first President, Mr Jinnah, and the first Prime Minister, Mr Liaquat Ali Khan (who was, it should be noted, assassinated), for insisting that political power must rest with the people, not with the armed forces, and that only an independent foreign policy pays in the long run.

The first part of these beliefs he practised with profit from the middle 1960s onwards, when he shook Ayub Khan's power with student power and then became a superb mass leader to sweep two successive general elections. But he betrayed the belief when he refused to let Sheikh Mujib reap the benefit of his own electoral magic, and for this betrayal Pakistan paid a grievous price eight years ago. Sheikh Mujib suffered for it four years ago, and Bhutto might have to pay a similar price sooner than this book reaches the reader's hands. Pakistan's history, and the lives of two of its most charismatic leaders might have been very different but for this betrayal.

The second part of these beliefs, about the value and importance of an independent foreign policy, was being rapidly built into his foreign policy when he was deposed. In his appeal statement also he praises India's non-alignment and urges President Zia to pull out of CENTO. Bhutto may well be right when he says that this is part of the reason why his downfall was manoeuvred at the "foreign" level of the deal. But he persists in the one aspect of Pakistan's foreign policy, implacable opposition to India, from which all aspects of its foreign policy had flowed in the past, including acceptance of hegemony and coup-gemony.

Whatever the record of Bhutto's actions his diag

of Pakistan is instructive not only for him or for Pakistan but for all Third World countries which are trying to develop conventions of democratic politics. The allegations against Bhutto and his counter allegations prove equally well how the political system of Pakistan has been so corrupted by years of arbitrary rule, whether civil or military, that it has lost the constraints of all those conventions which in a political healthy society are the best safeguards against the tyrannical use of executive authority.

Probably the most useful part of Bhutto's statement for the leaders of the Third World is his brilliant analysis of the proclivity towards martial law in the political system of Pakistan. Bhutto understands Pakistan better than any other politician, dead or alive. Its proclivity towards martial law he understands even better, having been both its accomplice and victim at various times. This makes him especially qualified to give a warning to the developing world, which he gives with great eloquence, against coup-gemony, a phrase he has coined out of his acute political perceptions and verbal wit.

He places the danger of home made coup-gemony alongside the danger of external hegemony, and while he roundly condemns both kinds of tyrannies upon the democratic and natural aspirations of the people, he condemns coup-gemony more because, as he says, coup-gemony is "the bridge upon which hegemony walks in." He analyses all the martial law regimes Pakistan has been through and he shows how each one of them was used by the foreign power which created it. The inevitable result was such emasculation of the political system of Pakistan, such draining away of its strength and values, that the country broke up.

The eastern wing was subjected to the inhuman brutalities of the western military mind which had become so callous as to be able to boast that to rape a Bengali woman was only "to purify Bengali blood" (Bhutto quotes an official report for this boasting). But no less disastrous is the tragedy inflicted upon the western wing by the martial law mentality. This has taken the form of convincing the patient that he can only live on the poison which the world knows is killing him.

President Zia seized power in "Operation Fairplay" on 5 July 1977, on the pretence that he had seized it only for the purpose of holding fair elections within 90 days. The army would do no more than to clear the ring and hold it only in order that the elections may become a fair contest. But then he changed his mind and said elections could be held only when it was clear that they would produce "a positive result".

Since he has constituted himself to be the sole judge for deciding what would be regarded as "a positive result," and for deciding when elections could be counted upon to produce it, he alone can decide when they can be held at all. How the President will ensure that the results are positive when elections are held, if they are, passes understanding. But in waiting for the ripe moment General Zia has extended the original 90 days to six times as many.

But probably a simpler reason why elections have not been held is that President Zia does not and has never believed in them. His truer beliefs are reflected in a remark of his for which Bhutto quotes him in his appeal statement. President Zia, who continues to be Chief of the Army Staff in addition to being President and Prime Minister, is quoted as having said "Whether it is or it isn't constitutional, power in Pakistan will always be wielded by the man who sits in the chair of the Chief of the Army Staff." Since Bhutto does not agree with that, the General will not allow any elections, unless he is forced to, in which Bhutto or his supporters may have any chance of coming back to power. That would not be a "positive result."

It is ironic that it was such a man whom Bhutto appointed as chairman of a committee to investigate the first attempt by the armed forces, in 1973, to overthrow Bhutto's presidency in a coup (just as it is ironic in retrospect that President Ayub sent Bhutto as his special envoy to Ankara to plead with the army generals who had overthrown Turkey's Democratic Party government not to carry out the death sentences they had passed on Prime Minister Menderes, Foreign Minister Zorku, and Finance Minister Krepakian; Bhutto failed and the executions were carried out). Whatever General Zia learnt as chairman of that inquiry committee he must have learnt very well.

#### *The Army versus the People*

Military leaders do not hold elections unless they have to. Nor will General Zia. In the meantime martial law will continue to take its toll, and in telling so vividly how exactly it is doing that Bhutto has done a very great service. Scattered in the pages of Bhutto's statement there are excellent insights into how the cancer of militarism spread in Pakistan, from the "we are like the Prussians" complex of General Ayub, a foolishness which Bhutto describes with a sense of fun to the insatiable appetite of the army budget (to which Bhutto also pandered, as General Zia testifies with unintended irony), to the equally insatiable appetite of the

military hierarchy for sheer power for the sake of power, first the appetite of the top generals for political power, and later the appetite of the colonels and majors for administrative power in every detail all the way down to local authority.

But the reader does not have to wade through the whole document for collecting the scattered gems of wisdom. The collective meaning of all of them has been brought into superb focus in a few pages about Baluchistan, the province which has been longer under military rule, sometimes both in name and fact, sometimes only in fact, than any other part of Pakistan. Here too Bhutto shares the blame for what he now condemns. But he reproduces a note by his Special Secretary, Rao Abdur Rashid, which is as it were an account of a demonstration on the scale of a laboratory model of what happens to politics, to the administration, to the whole society in fact, when all norms are crushed under the army heel.

Political irony assumes a new dimension in the exchange of allegations and counter allegations between the authors of the White Paper and Bhutto on the question of Baluchistan and on the X-ray Rao Abdur Rashid provides, combining political insights and the detached observations of an experienced administrator, about what is going on in that unfortunate province.

Rao Abdur Rashid describes, briefly but precisely, how the army was brought into Baluchistan in "sheer disgust," as a measure of "last resort." He explains how the induction of the army would have been justifiable only if it had remained "a quick, incisive, operation." He then explains, however, how it has become a "self-perpetuating operation," and how "the army's prolonged stay is causing adverse repercussions in many fields." To this the Special Secretary adds the observation that "unfortunately the army in this country has a long tradition of getting involved in the civil administration."

The White Paper acknowledges all that and then goes on to say "Despite Rao Rashid's justified reservations about the role of the army in civil affairs, it is a matter of record that Bhutto's regime did not follow a policy of gradual withdrawal of the army in Baluchistan." To this Bhutto retorts with a sense of horror. "This is adding insult to injury," he says. "On a number of occasions I pressed for a withdrawal plan, but on each occasion I was requested to extend the period for a few more months. That is the truth, the genuine and historical record, as opposed to the fable invented by this regime. Even now . . . has the regime withdrawn the army from

Baluchistan? Not only I but the people of Baluchistan would like to have an honest answer to this question."

This may only be a case of the pot calling the kettle black, because Bhutto's record in Baluchistan is not much better than the army's. But even if Bhutto's 300-page statement contained nothing more than his own and Rao Abdur Rasheed's analysis of what happened in Baluchistan, the statement would be a good addition to any library of political science. If the military rulers of Pakistan were wiser they would make the statement compulsory reading in every military school instead of suppressing it, because it provides an excellent case study of how an army damages itself, apart from damaging the political system, when it begins to dabble in politics, a task for which it has neither skill, nor experience, nor aptitude and cannot acquire it except by neglecting its main function as a fighting force.

This deterioration of the army in Baluchistan has been brought out very well by Rao Abdur Rashid, while a major Baluch leader, Ghaus Bux Bizenjo, has demonstrated how the centre's authority in Baluchistan has been eroded by the endless presence of the army and the strong Baluch reaction against it. Bizenjo, who has been regarded as only a moderate leader of the Baluch, resentment against Pakistan, is now demanding such powers of autonomy for Baluchistan that if they were conceded to all units—and they cannot be conceded to one unit and long denied to others—Pakistan would disappear before very long.

Bizenjo has spelt out his views in elaborate statements which are important for the future of that region. There is such cogent radicalism in them that one may well ask whether, in the wake of the revolution in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union is about to be granted the historic Russian dream for entry into the warm waters of the Arabian Sea.

The lessons of Baluchistan are only magnified many times by Bhutto's account of what happened in what was then East Pakistan, is happening, he says, in West Pakistan and can happen wherever in the Third World, military leaders try to do what military leaders have always tried to do in Pakistan. In another of his very perceptive observations, Bhutto says that encroaching on the civil service until it "would disappear . . . has been the steadfast policy of all martial law regimes, as part of an attempt at self-perpetuation at the cost of the unity and integrity of the country."

Bhutto himself contributed to the break up of Pakistan in 1971 by refusing to allow Sheikh Mujibur Rehman enjoy the fruits of his

electoral victory. But the intense resentment in what was then East Pakistan against the western wing, which made the explosion so devastating when it came, was provoked only by the deeds of the army, a western army which ruthlessly suppressed the eastern wing. What exactly the army did will not be known until Pakistan releases the Hamoodur Rehman Report or someone leaks it out. But what Bhutto has already said shows how damaging the Report must be.

"Even now my open commentary upon the Hamoodur Rehman Report would irreparably damage the name of the armed forces," he warns General Zia. He calls it "a severe indictment of the armed forces and the military hierarchy . . . it is a story of rape, plunder and loot." From his prison, Bhutto has demanded that General Zia should not be allowed to tamper with the Report.

To this indictment of what the army did in what was then East Pakistan, Bhutto adds the explicit warning that continued army rule is creating an even bigger crisis in what remains of Pakistan. "The crisis that Pakistan faces today is far graver and more catastrophic than the crisis of 1971." Bhutto adds "that in 1970, the danger was of losing East Pakistan. In 1978, the danger is of losing all of what remains of Pakistan." At one level there are judicial consequences of continued martial law, he says and at another level more dire consequences in terms of public order.

Continued suppression of the 1973 constitution, which is the only fundamental law Pakistan had when martial law set it aside, and the only one which had electoral sanction behind it, will mean that the constitution will lapse if it has not already done so. In that event Pakistan would be left standing only upon the Indian Independence Act of 1947. That in fact would be no foundation at all, because the constituent units of Pakistan would then regain all the autonomy they had before Pakistan was born. Bizenjo's dream would then replace Jinnah's.

At the level of public order "Pakistan is much closer to a civil war than it was in the worst days of spring 1977," says Bhutto making a reference to the riots after the elections in March 1977 because of which the army claims it had to step in. Bhutto warns General Zia "More than my life is at stake. Make no mistake about it, the future of Pakistan is at stake."

Bhutto's most far-reaching warning however is reserved for those countries of the Third World, which, when they lose patience with the untidy and slow moving democratic process, turn to the temptations of authoritarian rule, only to discover later, that its advantages

are imaginary or at best short-lived, but in the meantime, as in the case of Pakistan, yielding to the temptation becomes a habit.

I cannot think of any practising politician today who has shown the sweep of vision Bhutto shows in surveying military coups around the world, or has the intellectual penetration he shows in laying bare the roots of coup-gemony in Pakistan. But I can think of several practising politicians who could profit from four inter-connected warnings he gives to the Third World countries:

- \* "Military coup d'etats are the worst enemies of national unity."
- \* "If a coup d'etat becomes a permanent part of the political infrastructure, it means the falling of the last petal of the last withered rose, it means the end."
- \* "The events of the last 20 years have made me arrive at the unambiguous conclusion that at present, the greatest threat to the unity and progress of the Third World is from coup-gemony."
- \* "Coup-gemony is the bridge over which hegemony walks to stalk our lands."

Bhutto contrasts the politics of India and Pakistan in all of these respects, and he sums it all up in his own inimitable fashion:

"If India had suffered from martial laws and military dictatorships on the pattern of Pakistan, India would have been in three or four separate pieces by this day. India is more heterogeneous than Pakistan but India has been kept in one piece by the noise and chaos of her democracy."

Kept in one piece, and kept free Bhutto might have added because it is democracy which allowed Indian nationalism to raise enough noise to scare off any intruder who tried to bring in the baggage of hegemony.

Is Bhutto sincere in all this, or is he only coining clever phrases? Is he opposing military rule out of democratic conviction or because that is the only challenge now left to his power? Why is he blaming "a foreign power" for his overthrow? Because it is true? Or because that is a handy dog to whip any day? If Bhutto lives long enough he will have to answer these questions with his actions, and if the answers are to be in his favour, his actions will have to be vastly better than in the past. But for the present he is raising the questions and others have to answer them.

The most troublesome question he asks, and in these very words is "What about the nuclear reprocessing plant?" How good is Bhutto's claim that he was the victim of a conspiracy between a foreign power, by which he means the USA (though he hints at a Middle Eastern accomplice) on the one hand and on the other General Zia and PNA? And of course the ultimate question he asks is "What are the chances of my survival?" He does not quite put it that way because "it is an affront to my pride and vanity to speak of my own future." But he says enough to suggest that he is asking for an intervention on his behalf by leaders in Pakistan and in other countries.

Bhutto says "I would not have suffered the fate I am suffering had it not been for internal betrayal." What he means is:

(i) that those who had decided to deny Pakistan the nuclear reprocessing plant (in brief the bomb) overthrew him because he would not give it up;

(ii) that having overthrown him they had to imprison him because otherwise the people would put him back in power;

(iii) that having imprisoned him they want to hang him, or at least to break him or to keep him indefinitely in prison because otherwise he could be back in power one day;

(iv) that external forces found it possible to do all this only because they found accomplices within Pakistan;

(v) that the internal accomplices betrayed him because they were bribed to do so, PNA receiving money and the Chief of the Army Staff receiving satisfaction of his lust for power.

How good is the evidence behind this allegation? For an answer the allegation should be examined part by part, but in a brief summary I would say that the evidence is very good about the events, but not satisfactory about the motives behind them.

Bhutto is right in his explicit claim that he was able to negotiate an agreement with France which would have given Pakistan a nuclear reprocessing plant. He is also right in the claim which is implicit in his boasting, although he does not spell it out in so many words, that with this plant Pakistan would have acquired the technical capability of producing the bomb because the plant is capable of producing weapons grade plutonium.

There is overwhelming, well authenticated and almost public evidence that the United States put very strong pressure upon both Bhutto and France not to go ahead with the agreement, and as a consequence of this pressure France tried to pressurize Pakistan, but only after Bhutto's overthrow, to agree to modify the plant in such

a way that it would not be able to produce weapons grade plutonium.

There is also evidence that Bhutto was threatened that if he went ahead with acquiring the plant in its weapons grade form, he would be overthrown and might face worse consequences. There are two sources of evidence in support of the threat, apart from others that there might be. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Temple University, USA, says in an article published in *Asian Survey* (Summer, 1978) that during her research on the subject of this agreement, "one source" told her that the "out going American ambassador (in Islamabad) had gone so far as to tell Bhutto bluntly that if he did not back down he would no longer stay in power!" It was after this exchange that the United States is alleged to have supported opposition candidates in the March 1977 elections and to have encouraged the street agitation that ensued.

Bhutto's own statement is the second source. In the course of the statement he gives a very vivid account, too vivid and convincing to be fake, how his own minister for production warned him of the peril to his office and personal safety if he persisted in acquiring the reprocessing plant.

Bhutto's evidence and Miss Tahir-Kheli's are indirect and incapable of independent verification. But both are supported by subsequent events. Bhutto lost his job and is in imminent danger of losing his life. France, after resisting American pressure for a time, "proposed changes" in the agreement which would make the plant incapable of producing weapons grade plutonium, and since the end of last summer France has been pressing these changes upon Pakistan with vigour. But there is neither any proof that if Bhutto had remained in power he would have been able to make Pakistan a nuclear weapon country, nor that the Generals conspired at all to scuttle the plant, or did so in return for American hacking to their coup.

Bhutto's ambition to make Pakistan a nuclear weapon country is not open to doubt. There is direct evidence in his boasting. After India exploded a nuclear device at Pokharan in May 1974, he said if necessary Pakistan will "eat grass to produce the bomb." In his present statement also he boasts that if he had not been overthrown he would have put the Islamic civilization at par with the Hindu, Christian and Jewish civilizations by giving it "full nuclear capability." (Why he omitted reference to the Buddhist or Chinese civilization is best known to him.) There is also indirect evidence of his ambition for "full capability." Pakistan's nuclear programme itself

far in excess of the country's financial or general technological capability, would not have made commercial or technological sense at least for another decade or so. It would have made political sense but only as a means of making the bomb.

But even that would not have given Pakistan "full nuclear capability" in order to confer upon Pakistan the honour of making the first Islamic bomb. Bhutto admits as much by implication. He says he had accepted very stringent safeguards on the plant. Within these safeguards Pakistan would not have been able to use an ounce of recovered plutonium for the minimum of experimental explosions without which you cannot get on to the making of a reliably usable bomb. Nor can you demonstrate, for bargaining purposes, that you have acquired the capability of making it. After the Pokharan explosion the world does not accept, and what is more important, Pakistan does not accept that a peaceful explosion is any different from a military explosion.

If Bhutto had staged one in spite of the safeguards it would have meant an immediate cut off of all foreign nuclear technology for Pakistan, and its nuclear programme would have come to a halt because Pakistan has not acquired, and will not be able to acquire for many years yet, self-sustaining nuclear technology. Nor has its economy the strength as yet to withstand the pressures of international displeasure. India also ran this risk by staging the Pokharan bang and is still paying a price for it. But at least when India took the risk its nuclear as well as general capability and economic strength were of a much higher order.

Therefore when Bhutto says that with the help of the reprocessing plant he would have closed the nuclear gap between India and Pakistan he can only mean that he could have matched the Pokharan explosion with one of his own though some 10 years or so behind India. But after that the gap between the two countries might have become even wider than it is today. In any competition without foreign assistance to either country, India's advantages over Pakistan—financial, nuclear, technological—would have been greater than now. In fact, an explosion in Pakistan might have triggered off a greater effort by India than she is at present inclined to make in the nuclear field.

The irrationality of Bhutto's nuclear ambition is the biggest question mark which hangs over his allegation that General Zia scuttled the reprocessing plant in return for foreign backing for his coup. In their public statements Pakistani leaders are continuing to press France to carry out the agreement. Similarly for several

months after the coup, France continued to stand by the agreement in public, contradicting Bhutto's claim that France went back on the agreement because an illegitimate government had replaced his own legitimate government in Pakistan. But it is not necessary to accept these statements at face value. Even if France and Pakistan had decided to scuttle the plant their leaders would have made statements of this kind while agreeing behind the scenes to let the plant lapse. The main reason for not accepting Bhutto's allegation as proven is that General Zia could have had any one or more of three other reasons, each more honourable than a conspiracy, for not following the rash course set by Bhutto.

The first reason has been hinted at, but not elaborated, by the *Pakistan Economist* (21 October 1978) in an article very aptly entitled "Reprocessing Leaves One Cold." Its argument is that if Pakistan does at all wish to have a nuclear explosion capability it can follow other technologies, such as the uranium rather than the plutonium route, instead of colliding headlong with the safeguards which it has accepted. The second reason has been more forcefully expressed in the same article. It asks why "an already grass eating, hungry and naked people should be in such dire need of the horn that their entire destiny should be put at stake."

The third reason is purely military and might have had great appeal for General Zia. Being a soldier and not a scientist, he would much rather that Pakistan acquired those weapons which soldiers know and understand, and which "the power status

steps—imprisoning him, and either breaking or hanging him—were clearly dictated by the compulsions of Bhutto's continued electoral popularity.

### *What Lies Ahead?*

But whether Bhutto succeeds or not in proving the motives he attributes to General Zia, the General certainly does not succeed in justifying either the overthrow of Bhutto or what has been happening to him since then. The first White Paper tries to pin on Bhutto the allegation that he rigged the elections in March 1977. But it does not succeed. Bhutto does not succeed in proving that there was no rigging, or that he had no hand in such rigging as might have taken place. His explanation of how he came to sign the Larkana Plan is wholly unconvincing.

But Bhutto does succeed in proving, and the White Paper fails to disprove it, that he had a decisive majority support and even without any rigging would have won the election. He also succeeds in proving, and again the White Paper fails to disprove it, that such rigging as might have taken place could not have affected the result either way very much.

Clearly, therefore, what General Zia did was to depose a President and Prime Minister who had majority support among the people and in the National Assembly, and about the latter there is no dispute. The rioting which followed the elections was admittedly serious enough to make a soldier believe he should step in to save the country, especially a soldier predisposed towards intervening anyhow.

But even if it be not true, and Bhutto makes out a good case that it is true, that the army was party to the political unrest which it later cited as the reason for its intervention, the only extent to which the intervention could have been possibly justified was the limit General Zia announced at the outset. This limit was that the army would hold the arena for a very short period and only for holding impartial elections without worrying whether Bhutto would thus come back into power or not.

But the way martial law has been continued indefinitely makes it impossible to accept the General's announced intentions as honest. It also confirms Bhutto's suspicion that what the General means by "positive results," for which alone he is prepared to hold elections, is a result which would eliminate Bhutto. Since that is not going to happen for a long time yet, early elections can be ruled out and fair elections can be ruled out for even longer. The

martial law authorities will not hold such elections however much that might further destabilize Pakistan's future political system.

So long as Bhutto lives fair elections will be avoided for fear that he will win them or others will win them in his name. But even after his death, if it comes through execution, they will not be held for fear that someone will win them in the name of his ghost. He or his ghost can equally set at naught the recent dissidence in his party, whether the dissidence was genuine or engineered from outside.

The next thing that happened to Bhutto after his overthrow was his "trial" in the Lahore High Court on the charge that in a conspiracy hatched by him two members of the Federal Security Force tried to kill a political opponent of his and succeeded in killing the opponent's father. Bhutto has said many blunt things about the fairness of the trial, and much of the time he boycotted it in protest. But it is not necessary to take his word for it. Facts speak up for him as well as the former Attorney-General of the USA, Mr Ramsey Clark, who visited Pakistan during the Lahore trial and later published his assessment of it.

First off, he questions why two judges of the High Court who had some time earlier granted Bhutto's *habeas corpus* petition were excluded from the murder trial bench, and why on the other hand the Chief Justice had included himself in spite of a dispute he had with Bhutto when Bhutto was in power and the Chief Justice was superseded.

Secondly, after looking at the case he said he found the allegations against Bhutto to be "inherently improbable," the evidence of the chief witness to be "more than suspect," and the Chief Justice's prejudice against Bhutto to be "spread throughout his 145-page decision." After that it is difficult to disbelieve Bhutto's own description of how he was treated in court. Bhutto's treatment of his own opponents was probably worse. But that is a story which needs to be told separately.

What lies ahead of Bhutto as he waits in his death cell "in which more than two persons cannot sit" according to his counsel, Mr Bakhtiar? All the choices before him are grim, but the worst is the one which would be best from the point of view of the military rulers. However, there are no signs of its materializing.

The only thing which would let General Zia off the hook is a physical and moral collapse of Bhutto. In that case Bhutto's followers would not have the leader which a fit and free Bhutto can again become one day; nor would they have the rallying point and

inspiration which a martyred Bhutto would be. The General can then have the "positive result" elections he wants. Or not hold them at all; the pressure upon him might be much less if all that is left of Bhutto is a deflated leader. Several political parties, including PNA, are demanding elections. But if the PPP got deflated along with Bhutto, the army's tasks of political management would become much easier.

Bhutto's own description of his condition is pathetic, and since this was probably written some months ago, and since lately there have been reports of a hunger strike by him, he might well be worse off today and more than ever in need of a quick response to the appeal he makes to foreign powers and to domestic leaders. But if the past is any guide, Bhutto is a man of some resilience and high motivation reinforced by courage. Such politicians, when embattled, can turn out to be very durable.

Bhutto's twin appeals also suggest that. The olive branch he holds out to foreign powers is full of the sturdy thorns of his past convictions, and while appealing to domestic leaders for "negotiations between brothers" he still denounces "the curse and stigma of martial law." Throughout his statement there are other passages too which show that his intellectual vigour and sharpness of mind are as great as before, possibly greater.

In looking forward to Bhutto's collapse President Zia should also consider the case of another authoritarian President and another prisoner on the other side of Asia. In the Philippines President Marcos has been trying to break Aquino, whom he put into prison on a charge of conspiracy and murder. Aquino has held out for seven years already.

So what awaits Bhutto if he does not collapse? As things are—whether they will remain so is a point worth coming to a little later—visible possibilities are limited to two: early release through the gallows, and a long night of torment, with the dice loaded in favour of the former possibility. There is a series of other cases lined up against Bhutto, including another murder charge and one for rigging the elections. His trial in all of these can be expected to be as fair as his trial in the Lahore High Court was. The Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court is also the Chief Election Commissioner (a conjoining against which Bhutto protested in vain) and will no doubt have much to do with proving the rigging.

Therefore on the one hand Bhutto's chances of acquittal in the present murder case are dependent upon whether the Supreme

Court sees it fit to go into the whole matter afresh does do so freely, and does not merely confine itself to questions of law. There is not much of a question of law involved here anyhow; if the man committed murder he will hang. The real question is what are the facts of complicity and whether the Lahore High Court read the facts with an impartial mind. On the other hand even in the unlikely event of his being acquitted in his case, he will be kept behind the bars in other cases.

If the Supreme Court confirms the death sentence and Bhutto does not ask for clemency, there will be nothing to prevent General Zia from granting it on his own and reducing the sentence to life imprisonment. In deciding whether to do so or not he will have to take into account the reactions of other countries. But unfortunately for Bhutto diplomatic pressure will work both ways.

After the Lahore High Court judgement a number of countries urged General Zia not to carry out the sentence. India observed a hengin silence and will probably do so now as well. But China, the USA, the Soviet Union, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya and a number of other countries advised mercy. The Soviet Union went further, and instead of sitting on the fence plunged into a fluid situation and described Bhutto as progressive and his successors as reactionaries. (Moscow's day of reaping a dividend on that investment might come.)

But since the Lahore High Court judgement, the events in Iran have intervened against Bhutto. In the first place, as discussed earlier, these events have underscored for General Zia how dangerous Bhutto can be so long as he remains alive. In the second place they have removed the Shah, whose advice would have had more force in Pakistan. And in the third, they have made Saudi Arabia reluctant to give any advice which would be unwelcome to President Zia; having lost a brother monarch on one flank, Saudi Arabia would not like to disturb an authoritarian brother on the other flank. Therefore General Zia will probably find himself free to set his course according to his own preferences, and these preferences will be guided by the value he attaches to his own neck.

More important are the consequences for Pakistan in either of the two cases, that is early execution or indefinite imprisonment. Here reliance can be placed only on sheer speculation, and I will indulge in that within the four corners of these possibilities: First, there will be an explosion of popular anger if Mr Bhutto is executed. Second, President Zia will be able to control the explosion after a certain amount of bloodshed though the outside world

will not hear of the full extent of the bloodshed. Third, however, the Zia regime will not last very long after it succeeds in quelling the protest. Fourth, when President Zia moves out, Bhutto's ghost will sit in his place. Or Bhutto himself, if the first three things happen even upon Bhutto getting life imprisonment, which is possible, or if they happen with such speed (which is unlikely) that the displacement of General Zia takes place before the execution of Bhutto can be carried out. When this cycle of events has been completed, Pakistan will move into an entirely different orbit either because of or in spite of the successor regime or regimes.

There is not much scope for elaborating on this limited speculation. Bhutto has predicted a "conflagration" if he is "assassinated through the gallows." There will be a large fire, but not an uncontrollable one. There are two reasons for saying this: First, the cupidity and arrogance with which Bhutto used his power towards the end of his presidency has alienated from him a large number of people and agencies of action which otherwise would have helped in steeling the opposition to General Zia. It is their opposition to Bhutto which emboldened General Zia to strike against Bhutto, and it is their support which will enable General Zia to put out the fire before it gets out of hand.

Second, the diversity of regional political interests in Pakistan will dissipate some of the conflagration. All interests will stoke the fire to some extent. But thereafter each will try to pull in its own way. In the short run this will be of help to General Zia.

But only in the short run. In the long run the political nature of the sub-continent, in praise of which Bhutto has written a political lyric will assert itself in Pakistan also. In this it will be assisted by the following facts:

(i) The Pakistan army is largely a Punjabi army. The harder it strikes in the non-Punjabi provinces to put down disturbances the more it will provoke them in the long run.

(ii) The inspiration of Iran has made the whole region so much bolder, and the younger levels of protest, of which there are many hidden layers in Pakistan, have become especially difficult to suppress once they catch fire.

(iii) There is a sizable group of young officers in the army who found Bhutto more worth following than General Zia and whose radicalism leads them more in Bhutto's direction than in President Zia's.

This will mean first the discomfiture and then the replacement of the regime of General Zia, possibly first by a group of senior